

Peter Lee

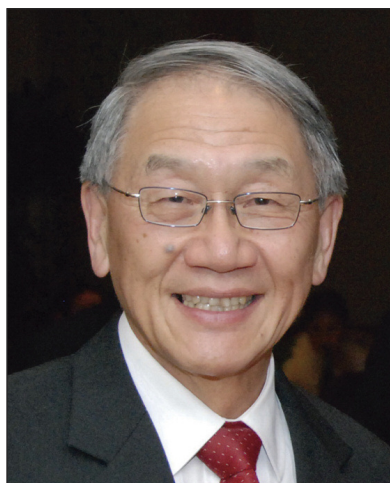
By Edward C. Keystone, MD, FRCPC

Peter Lee passed away peacefully on June 21st, 2014 at the age of 71. Peter was born in New Zealand on February 18th, 1943. He was a graduate of the University of Otago, in New Zealand, where he received his internal medicine training. He completed his rheumatology training as a research fellow at the Centre for Rheumatic Diseases and Glasgow Royal Infirmary with Dr. Watson Buchanan, and subsequently as a clinical fellow in the Rheumatic Disease Unit (RDU) at the Wellesley Hospital in Toronto. Peter joined the staff of the RDU in 1979 and moved to Mount Sinai Hospital in 1998 with the impending closure of the Wellesley Hospital.

Peter truly exemplified the excellence of an academic as a clinician, educator, and researcher. As a clinician, he was an excellent diagnostician with caring, kindness, and a generosity of spirit toward his patients that generated their enormous love and respect. The many gifts from his patients that adorned his office were a true testament to his care. Few people can point to a certificate of greetings from the Pope on their office wall, a personal gift from a grateful patient. Peter loved to interact with his patients very much on a personal level, getting to know their family, interests, hobbies, goals and aspirations.

Peter was known for his excellence in teaching, as well as his mentorship. He was clearly responsible for attracting many students into the field of rheumatology.

As a researcher, Peter had a long and distinguished academic career exemplified by his promotion to Professor of Medicine within the University of Toronto in 1995. He established the first Scleroderma Research Program in Canada at the Wellesley Hospital with a longitudinal research database of over 1,000 patients—easily the largest in Canada and one of the major centres in the world. The Scleroderma Clinic became a local, provincial,



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and national resource. He published some 115 peer-reviewed papers, many of which described novel features of scleroderma, including articular, neurologic, and coagulation abnormalities, as well as its association with breast cancer.

An internationally recognized expert in the field of scleroderma, Peter served as a member of the Medical Advisory Board of the Scleroderma Research Foundation (USA), as well as being a medical advisor to the Scleroderma Society of Ontario. Peter's legacy in scleroderma will live on with the appointment of the best and the brightest to direct

the Scleroderma Clinic and the Scleroderma Research Program.

His many professional accomplishments include Chairman of the Rheumatology Examination Board for the Royal College, Chair of the Therapeutic Committee of the CRA, and member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Rheumatology. He was also an active member of the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong. He made significant contributions to the Chinese medical community, serving as President of the Chinese Canadian Medical Society of Ontario and President of the Federation of Chinese Canadian Professionals.

His colleagues recognized Peter's distinguished career in 2008 with The Rheumatologist of the Year Award from the Ontario Rheumatology Association (ORA). The CRA recognized his national and international leadership in the field of scleroderma in 2013 with the Distinguished Rheumatologist Award. He also received the Ontario Volunteer Service Award from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration in 2012.

On a personal note, Peter has been an outstanding colleague to work with. His easy-going manner, delightful sense of humour and masterful storytelling coupled with his warmth and extremely supportive nature made him a

key player in our unit. Despite his illness he never wavered in his commitment to his colleagues and patients alike. Peter was stoic and courageous without complaints throughout his cancer journey; his philosophy was to “just get on with it”. Unlike many of us, Peter was able to maintain a great work-family balance, spending quality time with his family and still managing to have a reasonable golf score and a well-manicured garden.

While many of us like to be remembered for their academic accomplishments, I prefer to remember Peter

as a really great guy and wonderful human being whom we were all privileged to know.

*Edward C. Keystone, MD, FRCPC
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Dr. Lee received the CRA Distinguished Rheumatologist award in 2013.